



## Technique to answer interview questions

Many people find interviews anxiety-inducing due to the many uncertainties involved. You're expected to come up with answers to unpredictable questions, evaluated by strangers, and those responses ultimately determine whether you land the job. You need to think quickly as to how you can best answer succinctly whilst making an impact so that you stand out amongst other candidates.

This is why it's so crucial to prepare every step of the way throughout your journey into employment. All the steps you've taken on your journey will support you in your interview. So all the covering letters you've written, job descriptions you've reviewed, applications you've completed and interviews you've attended — all of this will help you shape your answers.

Most of the questions in interviews are competency based, where the interviewer wants to find out whether you have the skills and experience to perform and excel in the post applied for. Some questions could cover numerous aspects and contain more than one question. You can easily get lost in your answer and stumble with words or lose your thread — especially when under pressure.

In these instances, there is a useful technique that will help you answer questions clearly and concisely, to ensure you make a positive impact during an interview.

### The CAR technique

The CAR technique is particularly useful for challenge-based situations where you're demonstrating how a problem was overcome. This answering technique can help distill your thoughts and shape a concise evidence-based answer.



**Context/Challenge**  
What was the situation?



**Action**  
What did you do about it?



**Result**  
What happened as a result?

## Context/Challenge

Set the scene so the interviewer understands the context of the situation you are exploring. What was demanding or challenging about the situation you were in? Very often this step is skipped as you might assume the interviewer knows what you are talking about. Try not to provide unnecessary detail, but ensure they have sufficient information to appreciate what you were up against or the expectations others had of you.

### Some of the aspects that you could explore when scene setting where relevant:

Budget | Timescale | Resources | Market  
| Economy | Staffing | Training | Risks  
| Skills gap | Technology | Culture |  
Language | Communication | Expectations  
| Dynamics | Sector challenges | Quality  
| Ethics | Inclusion | Productivity |  
Innovation | Regulations | Workload

**Example:** The team I joined had just been through a difficult restructure and their budgets had been severely cut due to the recession. Numerous retail outlets had closed as people moved towards online purchasing but targets for high street retail remained the same. Everyone in the team were dispirited and knew it would be hard to hit those targets given the current climate.

## Action

This is your moment to shine and show your strengths. You can now switch from scene setting to your role in the situation. What did you do within the situation you described? What were your objectives? How did you meet them? What strategy or approach did you take? How did you tackle barriers or challenges?

Don't be afraid of taking ownership and singing your own praises because this is what the interviewer is waiting to hear — what part did you play in bringing about success?

### Some of the aspects that you could explore when scene setting where relevant:

Objectives | Strategy | Implementation  
| Innovation | Evaluation | Evidence |  
Research | Initiative | Opportunity |  
Solutions | Collaboration | Leadership  
| Quality | Scalability | Sustainability |  
Inclusion | Cost-effective | Compliance |  
Stakeholders | Communication | Resources

This more detailed approach provides a fuller picture of your capabilities and the value you can bring to a new role. So instead of saying "I installed a new filing system" you could say:

**Example:** After researching best practice and collaborating with team members, I developed a strategy to overhaul our filing system. I set clear objectives for improved efficiency and implemented an innovative digital solution. Throughout the process, I continuously evaluated our progress using key metrics and adjusted our approach based on evidence-gathered feedback.



## Results

This is the final roundup that brings together your achievements within the situation you're exploring. This is where you define the impact you achieved. How were you able to succeed? How did you measure that success? What did you learn from this experience? At this stage it's important to evidence your achievement too so that it is grounded in data.

### Some of the aspects that you could explore when scene setting where relevant:

Outcomes | Data | Metrics | Qualitative  
| Quantitative | Impact | Recognition |  
Personal growth | Development | Efficiencies  
| Accolades | Feedback | Financial benefits  
| Performance | Process improvements |  
Innovation | Future proofing | Scalability |  
Sustainability | Results | Benchmark

**Example:** As a result of the streamlined process I implemented, we reduced project completion time by 30%, saving the company an estimated £20,000 annually. Client satisfaction scores increased by 25%, and our team was recognized with the company's innovation award. These improvements have since been adopted by other departments, amplifying the impact across the organization.



### Context/ Challenge

A distressed customer came in to make a complaint at a really busy time. Other customers were forming a queue around the checkouts, whilst the complaint was being aired for everyone to hear. A crowd was gathering and others were anxiously leaving the shop.



### Action

Thinking quickly, I checked to see if a private booth was free and reassured the customer that her complaint would be taken seriously and offered her a more private space so that she could explain in detail. I then notified the team to work on processing the queue that had built up to ensure less people were circulating around the customer as this could be off putting to both.



### Result

I was able to actively listen to the customer and notify them of our complaints procedure and the next steps we would take to rectify the matter. She left calm and more assured that we had taken time to understand the situation and confident of the timelines for resolving the issue. The disruption to other shoppers was kept to a minimum and everyone's safety was our priority.



**Within this one answer you have demonstrated the following:**

- Comprehend and adhere to company policy
- Understand customer safety
- Conflict resolution techniques
- Empathy and active listening skills
- Reliable, trustworthy
- Adaptable and agile in difficult situations
- Problem solving and solution-focused
- Ability to lead and direct others
- Respectful of customer rights.

Practicing the CAR technique before your interview will help embed it further. This simple and powerful technique will help you deliver a compelling and evidence-rich response with maximum impact. It's not just about answering questions — it's about proving your value and suitability for the role. With practice, you'll craft responses that are both comprehensive and concise, leaving a lasting impression that sets you apart from other candidates.



**Using CAR you will be:**

1. Demonstrating your analytical skills and strategic thinking
2. Highlighting your strengths and experiences
3. Evidencing your achievements
4. Revealing your personality, values and work ethic.



**Find out more**

[mentalhealth-uk.org/into-work](https://mentalhealth-uk.org/into-work)